



(acknowledgement, praise), non-verbal (a look of appreciation, a pat or a hug) and material reinforcements (making the person's favorite dish) will all contribute in some measure to recovery.

Social support

Many families take the help of their support systems in the treatment of this illness. They often discuss the individual's problem with other relatives, who in turn offer 'advice'. This can be a source of resentment for the recovering individual and must be avoided.

Once the person begins treatment, the family members need to ensure that his/her support systems are strengthened. Significant people in the support system (e.g. friends, co-workers) must also encourage the person's attempts to be drug-free.

When the individual is not amenable for treatment

Willingness for treatment often varies, depending on the level of motivation. Sometimes, even when the family is encouraging and supportive, the individual refuses treatment or is uncooperative. In such cases it is good for the family to:

- Develop problem solving skills
- Identify and stop enabling behaviors (covering up, making excuses, taking on responsibility for the consequences of substance use)
- Get the support of a self-help group
- Develop a sense of detachment.

There is also a need for hope that the drug dependent person will, at some crucial point, become motivated to accept treatment.

Developing Community Drug Rehabilitation and Workplace Prevention Programme

(AD/IND/94/808)

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The Family and Drug Addiction

The family is very important in a drug dependent person's life. Family members may be closely involved with several aspects of the addiction: family members' response to the addiction, their response to the dependent person and influence on the course of addiction, and their role in the individual's treatment and aftercare, which may either aid recovery or precipitate relapse.

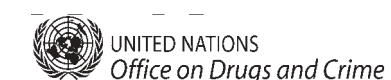
Responses of the Family to Addiction

Many partners of drug dependent persons suffer anxiety, insomnia, tension and depression. Other family members often have serious social and psychological problems. They often feel a strong sense of guilt or anger and have a desire for vengeance, which they may take out on their children or colleagues at work.

An important factor is denial of the problem by family members. Denial is an unconscious process of blocking out reality. With regard to problems associated with alcohol and drug abuse, denial is manifested in one or more of the following ways; in the failure to:

- See the problem entirely
- Recognize the extent or severity of the problem
- See the connection between drug use and the problems it has caused
- Understand that the drug dependent person needs help in dealing with the problem.

Manifestations of denial include covering up for the addicted person, doing the work that he/she does not complete, paying the bills that he/she does not pay, rescuing him/her from various kinds of problems, e.g. legal problems, and generally taking up the responsibilities the person has abandoned. The family can also deny their own part in the addiction: *'I don't know where she gets the money to buy*





drugs.' 'He doesn't mean to hurt us.' 'Her performance will improve.' 'She just needs to snap out of it.'

Denial lets everyone pretend that there is no problem. The longer denial goes on, the longer it takes before drug-using individuals change their behavior.

Responses to the Addicted Individual and Influence on the Course of Addiction

The partner or significant family member may either be supportive of the dependent person or show extremely unhelpful behaviors ('inducing' the individual to continue drug use). A supportive partner can greatly reduce damage, and be extremely helpful in treatment. The 'inducer' does not understand the dependent person and responds by scolding constantly, imposing excessive surveillance, restrictions and threats all of which actually worsen drug use in the majority of cases.

Enabling behaviors

Often when family and friends try to 'help' the affected person, they are actually making it easier for the progression of the problem. This is called 'enabling'. It helps the dependent person avoid the consequences of his/her action. This in turn leads to continued drug use, with the knowledge that someone is always there for the rescue.

Common 'Enabling' (addiction maintaining) Responses

- i. Lying or making excuses for the addicted person's symptoms (e.g. calling up the employer to say the person is 'sick')
- ii. Taking the blame for the person's drug use or behavior
- iii. Avoidance of the topic of drug use with the person out of fear of his/her response
- iv. Paying the debts that the person is supposed to settle himself or herself
- v. Lending money to the person
- vi. Drinking or using drugs along with the person in the hope of strengthening the relationship
- vii. Giving the person 'one more chance', and then another and another
- viii. Simply threatening to leave and then staying on each time
- ix. Finishing a job or project that the person failed to complete himself/herself.

Common enabling responses are mentioned in the accompanying box. If the family member answers 'yes' to most or all of these questions, he/she has not only been enabling the drug user, but has probably become a major contributor to the growing and continuing problem.

Role of Family in Treatment and Aftercare

The family's participation and encouragement during active treatment is very important. However, they are often extremely distressed and have often exhausted all their resources. Therefore, they need a lot of assistance and encouragement to be able to support the person in treatment.

The dependent person can also induce a sense of guilt in the family members, especially when not yet motivated to change. Some of the ways the drug user may induce guilt in a family include:

- Complaining about the quality of treatment
- Saying that he/she will die if the drug is not provided. Many family members feel helpless and secretly bring in the drug to the treatment facility, hidden in food and drink
- Threatening suicide if the family does not 'rescue' him/her from the treatment center
- Making unrealistic demands on the family: 'Set up a shop for me immediately', 'Find me a job'.

In such situations, family members become even more helpless. Therefore, establishing a trusting relationship with them, providing support, educating them about withdrawal related behavior, aiding them in decision making, and helping them with problem solving and communication become extremely important. Only when they themselves change will they be able to support and facilitate change in the addicted person.

Denial and enabling behaviors on the part of the family also have to be discussed with the family. A trusting

relationship with the counselor is an initial step in getting the family to recognize denial, discuss it, and learn to accept it. Discussion about enabling behaviors and ways of modifying them is also an important step in treatment. This will help the family put the responsibility for the consequences of substance use on the person using the substance.

Role of the Family in Aftercare

Treatment in substance abuse does not simply involve getting the individual to stay sober, but also includes helping him/her get back to their normal level of functioning. The following aspects need to be looked into.

Role structures

Drug dependence affects the user's role, status and functioning in the family.

The client's role within the family can be clarified by:

- Involving the family members and helping them work *with* the dependent person rather than *for* him/her.
- Getting the support of family members in normalizing the affected person's activities and helping him/her get back to their initial and full functional role.
- Educating the family on the need to reintegrate the person back into the family and facilitating this by involving the patient in the decision making and problem solving processes in the family.

Communication

The way the family members react to the individual and help him/her get back to their normal level of functioning is greatly affected by the communication patterns in the family.

- If family members have avoided direct communication with the individual during his/her addiction process, they find it difficult to change this pattern even when he/she is drug-free. For example, children get used to asking for things from the

Changes in family role structure in addiction

Prior to addiction, the person would have had a productive role, taking responsibility, such as being head of the family, or being a part of the decision making process

Once the person becomes dependent on drugs, he/she is looked upon as somebody who needs to be protected from the outside world.

He/she is therefore not given any kind of responsibility or involved in activities that could engage him/her constructively

This results in a lot of boredom, guilt and loss of self-esteem as the person ends up feeling worthless. This in turn could worsen the addiction or lead to a relapse

In certain situations another family member takes on the person's role. For instance, the wife who initially had the housewife's role takes up a job and begins to function as the head of the family. She therefore becomes reluctant to let go of the power that she now enjoys

Not involving the family in the treatment process can also let other family members form a clique that excludes the dependent person, who in turn feels left out and finds himself/herself a stranger in his/ her own family.

dependent father through the mother and do not speak to the father directly even when he is recovering.

- The family members also get into a pattern of bringing up past issues from when the dependent person used to create problems due to the addiction. This can affect the individual's sense of guilt and self-esteem.

Family members thus need to be counseled on appropriate communication.

Reinforcement patterns

Encouragement of the recovering person by family members plays a key role in the recovery process. At the outset, the family may have severely condemned the individual's behavior due to addiction. If they maintain this behavior during the process of recovery, they will actually increase the risk of relapse. Instead, complimenting the person on his/her efforts to recover will make them feel recovery is worthwhile and will adequately reinforce the recovery process. Verbal